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Jill Jackson: Pioneering in the Press Box

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts
in
History

by

Camille Perkins

B.A., Louisiana College, 2014

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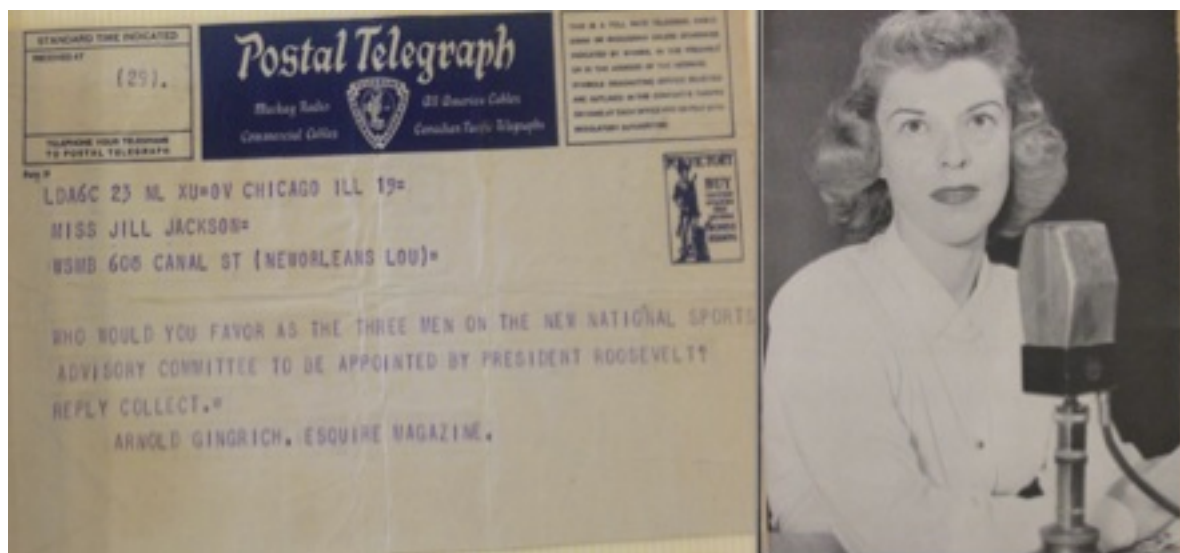
Abstract

Jill Jackson was one of the first female sports journalists and a pioneer voice for women in athletics. Although heretofore overlooked in the history of American sports journalism, the story of her career is an addition not only to the historiography of female sports journalists but also to the broader study of women in the mid-twentieth century. Jackson was admired, a hard worker, from a prominent New Orleans family, and well educated, yet she still was treated unequally in her primary workspace—the press box. Jackson left well-documented story to the Nadine Vorhoff Library and Special Collections at Newcomb College Institute in New Orleans. The collection, comprised of scrapbooks, photographs, letters, and newspaper articles, reveal the struggles and rewards of her impressive career.

Jill Jackson; Sports; Women Journalists; Sports Journalism; New Orleans

Introduction

In October of 1933, *Esquire*, an American men's magazine, first published write-ups by Ernest Hemingway and coverage of golf and boxing by other notable male journalists of the time.¹ The magazine gained the loyalty of many male readers and became one of the most popular magazines in the country. In 1946, *Esquire* chose Jill Jackson, a female sports journalist from New Orleans, as a member of the magazine's sports poll. Her membership card arrived addressed to "Mr. Jill Jackson."²



Left, a telegram from *Esquire Magazine* after Jackson was sent her membership card, this time addressed "Miss Jill Jackson." This telegram shows *Esquire Magazine* asking for Jill Jackson's advice on who would be best to fill a position that directly influenced athletics across the nation. Right, a photo taken for the *South Magazine* article in 1947. Folder I, Box II, "Jill Jackson Papers," Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library and Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

Admired for her knowledge of sports and play-by-play announcing, Jill Jackson won the respect of her predominantly male audience nationwide. Her story provides an example of the barriers put up against female sports journalists in the 1940s and how these women navigated around these barriers towards success. Writing on her Olivetti typewriter, Jackson was a pioneer

¹Andrew Chaikivsky, The Esquire Timeline: 1932-2003, *Esquire Magazine*, September 30, 2005, www.esquire.com/news-politics/a2607/esq1003-oct-timeline.

²Carolyn Kolb, "Jill Jackson's Salad Days," *New Orleans Magazine*, February 1, 2008,

²Carolyn Kolb, "Jill Jackson's Salad Days," *New Orleans Magazine*, February 1, 2008, <http://www.myneworleans.com/New-Orleans-Magazine/February-2008/Jill-Jacksons-Salad-Days>.

of female sports journalists in the United States—one of the few female sports reporters on major television and radio programs in the country. Admired for her competency Jackson won the respect of her male audience and colleagues; however, she walked away from the locked doors of the Tulane Stadium press box at the height of her career as a sports journalist.³ Her valued work by her employers and by the people of New Orleans was advertised in the newspapers, yet the physical barrier of the press box stifled the growth of her work in the city. Her long and successful career as part of a small group of female sports reporters in the mid-twentieth century serves as an example of the challenges for those women who experienced discrimination and injustice by the male dominated arenas of sports and journalism. In 1947, *South Magazine* wrote:

Resisting as far as possible the urge to make jokes about going up the hill, let's talk about somebody named Jackson, Jill. Imagine a citizen who knows as much baseball as Durocher, Leo, and also has a voice and a smile like-patra, Cleo...radio has hundreds of sports commentators who smoke pipes and have chins that bristle and only one at whom audiences would whistle. She holds a job not only man-sized but man-criticized; of fan-mail (male) she gets month after month an avalanche, and barrels of monkeys are what she has more fun than. Little boys want to grow up and get veto bills, but all right-thinking little girls want a career like Jill's—for this has been woman's dream since Earth was bald and black; to be able to talk and talk to thousands and thousands of men who can't talk back!⁴

The Rise of Women in Twentieth Century Journalism

Historians have traced the growing opportunity for careers in journalism for American women in the nineteenth century. Jean Marie Lutes in *Front-Page Girls* writes that by the end of the century, women began to show a greater presence in journalism. Lutes argues that as reporting became more of an acceptable occupation for women, their numbers increased, and female readership increased. Although this growth in readership opened more job opportunities

³ Box I, "Jill Jackson Papers," Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁴ "She Knows the Score," *South Magazine*, October 1947, 1.

for female writers, their participation was confined to specific areas of the news or areas considered appropriate for women writers, such as advertisements for department stores, gossip columns, and the “women’s pages.”

Despite impressive gains, the rapid rise in the number of female reporters did not herald a major transformation of the male-dominated newspaper business, and women remained a minority on newspaper staffs... ‘Women should expect no special treatment in newsrooms,’ they were repeatedly warned.⁵

With no special treatment, Madelon Schlipp Golden and Sharon M. Murphy write of how in the late nineteenth century, journalism became one of the first respectable occupations that a female could hold, and historians account for a number of women who would take to journalism as a successful lifetime career.

As the greater presence of women in journalism contributed to a rise in female reading interest, female journalists brought on staff represented the woman’s perspective on topics other than those of the women’s pages. Taking advantage of this opportunity, women journalists sought broader topics to write about for the popular press. Women wrote about court cases or exclusive situations like murder trials. Nellie Bly and others like her elbowed their way out of the women’s pages with stunt reporting, or immersion journalism in which the reporter would participate in a situation to better understand and report a story. Nellie Bly is known for going undercover at Blackwell’s Women’s Lunatic Asylum in order to report the abuses of the patients. Though this form of journalism has been criticized, it is significant to the history of female journalists. Patricia Bradley explains the tabloid period at the turn of the century was also an opportunity for women to participate in journalism beyond the women’s pages. Tabloids and magazines became major vehicles for female writers throughout the country. Even more opportunities emerged for female journalists as publications solely for women, such as *Woman’s*

⁵ Jean Marie Lutes, *Front-Page Girls: Women Journalists in American Culture and Fiction, 1880-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 9.

Day and Good Housekeeping, were established.⁶

Female journalists pioneered in a business that remained inhospitable, and these women had to find ways around barriers towards their success. As Golden and Murphy relate, “Women with brains and education and with perhaps a little more spirit than their meeker sisters found it comparatively easy to disguise their handwriting, adopt a pseudonym, and make a place for themselves in the male world of debate and controversy.”⁷ One such reporter was Dorothy Dix, born Elizabeth Meriwether, who like Jill Jackson took a pseudonym and got her start in New Orleans.⁸ Women working for newspapers and news castings around the country often dropped their birth name for catchy pen names. This trended among female journalists, even in the late nineteenth century. Dix, credited with being one of the first to take a pseudonym, represented a larger collective group of women who often used pseudonyms during the early twentieth century. They used this method to overcome the impression that their husbands maintained their source of success or to separate work life from home life. Golden and Murphy also note that Meriwether “chose the pen name Dorothy Dix—alliterative pseudonyms being vogueish in those days for gentlewomen concealing their real names from the stigma of the sordid newspaper world. And she was an overnight star.” Dix kept the pseudonym with the *Times-Picayune* for fifty-five years, joined by a host of other female journalists who would take a pseudonym at the same paper, including Jill Jackson.⁹

After interviewing a number of influential pioneering journalists, Jean Collins came to the conclusion:

⁶ Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1905-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 137.

⁷ Madelon Schlipp Golden and Sharon M. Murphy, *Great Women of the Press* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 1.

⁸ Box II, The Dorothy Dix Collection, F.G. Woodward Library, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN. Library.apsu.edu/dix/dix.htm

⁹ Golden, *Great Women of the Press*, 115.

...a keen sense of humor helped smooth the way for many of the women. They say they couldn't have survived without the ability to laugh at themselves and their occasional predicaments, whether it was being falsely accused of murder or getting stuck in a deep Japanese bathtub... Self-confidence in job-hunting, even pretended confidence often paid off.¹⁰

As historians have pointed out, these strategies enabled women to enter into the field of journalism at a time that proved itself inhospitable to them, and to enter areas of journalism initially forbidden them. Scholars often write how women in journalism were successful as a direct result of their willingness and persistence to navigate around difficulties. Catherine Cole, another notable female journalist from New Orleans, was known as one of the most audacious female journalists in the country. Not from a wealthy background, Cole worked her way into “an intelligent newspaper woman,” as Miki Pfeffer suggests in her book *Southern Ladies and Suffragists*. Cole is noted as being the “pioneer working woman in the South,” as she championed her working-class background through her writing.¹¹ Historians use Cole as an example of a working female journalist who succeeded through her hard work and confidence rather than her social position.

While these opportunities opened up, Bradley explains that social prohibitions still kept women out of certain journalism fields. She argues that in the United States, these social restrictions varied according to circumstance. Bradley adds that other factors, such as promoting a particular ideology and media interests, also affected how extensive the restrictions:

Although questions of gender difference are influenced by philosophy, religion, immigrant and ethnic traditions, it is part of this work to address how gender differences were (and are) upheld by media interests, largely for their aligned purposes. In the early national period, for example, the political press found women in the home most useful in promoting a conservative political ideology...

¹⁰ Jean E. Collins, *She Was There: Stories of Pioneering Women Journalists* (New York: Julian Messner, 1980), 15.

¹¹ Miki Pfeffer, *Southern Ladies and Suffragists: Julia Ward Howe and Women's Rights at the 1884 New Orleans World's Fair* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 32.

Women found entry into the mass magazines and mass newspapers that sought advertisers for the new rush of industry-made goods by providing the ‘women’s angle,’ thought to attract female readers. But it was still the job of the ‘women’s angle’ to maintain domesticity as the major definition for women.¹²

Chambers, Steiner, and Fleming note that once hired, women often had to fight to cover stories considered suitable only for male reporters, while also contesting to write in styles other than those of heavy feminine appeal.¹³ In agreement with other literature, Chambers, Steiner, and Fleming also argues that journalism continued to be a tough field to gain fairness as women remained “confined to marginal areas of news—fashion, domestic issues and a form of ‘society news,’ that is, essentially glorified gossip about the lives of the rich and famous. Aware of their restrictions, these women fought for a different reality for the newsroom at great personal cost.”¹⁴ Previously banned from political reporting or other issues of substance, aspiring female journalists found a way to write about these topics by embracing the writing style of the “woman’s angle.” In *Women and the Press*, Patricia Bradley explains:

This looking at the world from the woman’s angle was interpreted in journalism schools in the ways that already had been established. Journalism schools trained women to be society reporters and work on small-town papers. Even at a time when the suffrage campaign had involved women in sophisticated political maneuvering at local and national levels and women reporters had proved themselves as foreign correspondents in World War I, political reporting was considered off limits to women reporters...For women who wanted to find a place in journalism, providing the ‘women’s angle’ was the cost of the journey.¹⁵

In the early twentieth century, early female journalists wrestled with a difficult contradiction: accepting the restrictions in their field while still being deemed professional, or writing as they pleased at the risk of heavy scrutiny. Though male journalists certainly had struggles of

¹² Golden, *Great Women of the Press*, 1.

¹³ Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner, and Carole Fleming, *Women and Journalism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 30.

¹⁴ Chambers, *Women and Journalism*, 16.

¹⁵ Bradley, *Women and the Press*, 184-185.

their own, the burdens continued unequally. Chambers explains that “by marking out the gender of women journalists as odd and abnormal while treating the gender of male journalists as neutral, male editors created an effective barrier to women’s success.”¹⁶

Patricia Marks explains that in many cases, female writers became the subject of ridicule in their own newspapers. Some of their fellow male writers would go as far as to print satirical articles and caricatures of women filling masculine roles with the intention of pointing out that their new opportunities in journalism continued as improper roles for women, and those against women’s presence in journalism believed them to be unfeminine and improper. Women were often depicted ironically as doctors, lawyers, and business owners, roles that, interestingly enough, became reality soon. Marks notes that in these satires, men portrayed women as “too knowing or too innocent, too masculine or too feminine” in their writing styles.¹⁷ She mentions many journalists believed women’s new presence in journalism would be only temporary, that these women existed as merely part of a fad, and romanced by the idea that, as Marks wrote, “being a ‘bachelor girl’ and living a Bohemian life were preferable to the ordinary course of marriage and family.”¹⁸

Women in the early twentieth century could be successful in journalism with dedication and sacrifice. Though success was possible, some fields of journalism that remained less populated by female journalists. For example women rarely, if ever, worked in the press box with stadiums and venues often having a “no women’s rule” as an unspoken standard. This ban on women in the press box became the greatest challenge that Jackson faced in her career, as other female sports journalist had faced similar difficulties.

¹⁶ Chambers, *Women and Journalism*, 24.

¹⁷ Patricia Marks. *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1990), 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 88.

The Female Sports Journalist and the Press Box

As female journalists fought to cover the topics they wanted, and overcame obstacles to get them, more women wrote on subjects that were traditionally reserved for men—most notably sports. As opportunities in journalism opened up for women, those who chose the field of sports journalism found special challenges, but as their numbers grew, they rearranged the reality of the newsroom. Historians see that there was an impressive presence of female sports journalists in the early twentieth century that were fully prepared to overcome obstacles to do their job or as Boyle argued,

Contrary to the impression conveyed by many scholars and members of the popular press, women's participation in the field of sports journalism is not a new or relatively recent phenomenon. Rather, the widespread emergence of female sports reporters can be traced to the 1920s, when the gender-based notions about employment and physicality changed substantially. Those changes, together with a growing leisure class that demanded expanded newspaper coverage of athletic heroes, allowed as many as thirty-five female journalists to make inroads as sports reporters at major metropolitan newspapers during the 1920s.¹⁹

Historians note that this presence of female sports reporters in the early part of the twentieth century became motivated by a rise of participation moved along by the growth of a leisure lifestyle, as leisurely pursuits of the early twentieth century promoted a rise in organized sports.

Jill Jackson worked in the 1940s, a time that is often characterized as a window of opportunity for many women in America. As hands became needed to take the place of war-going men, American women stepped up to a variety of previously unattainable laboring positions. This proved not only true in industry, but also in newsrooms and journalism positions across the country. Though Jill Jackson's story does not indicate that she secured a job opportunity because of the war, many of her colleagues seized the opportunity to obtain jobs in sports journalism in the 1940s because of the reality of male journalists leaving for the war. The

¹⁹ Raymond Boyle, *Sports Journalism: Context and Issues* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 148.

war not only fast-tracked women into traditionally male-reserved occupations, but it also continued the country's move towards leisurely pursuits and spectator sports, and the concomitant thirst by the public for information on these sports that had been growing for over a century.

Following a long era of industrialization, the labor reformations of the late nineteenth century changed the lives of the working class. Out of an interest for discouraged workmen, labor groups fought for better wages, safer environments, and more reasonable hours. State governments reconsidered existing legislation for a reality that provided an improved workplace. This directly affected the working class, as hours were shortened, and men, women, and children found more leisure time. The chant of "Eight hours for work; eight hours for rest; eight hours for what we will" became a reality as eight more hours in a day for leisure time became available.²⁰ This left time for people to participate in and watch others compete in sports. Beginning in the Northeast, organized sports were established across the country, and changed what Americans did in their spare time. These organized sports, predominantly baseball, brought along a demand for information on local teams, which in turn created the sports reporter. The demand for these sports journalists increased as competitive sports in America began to gain more organization. Arenas and stadiums were built in order to facilitate sporting events, and the press box became a designated area for reporters to see the game clearly and report to fans at home.

Though other sporting activities such as horse racing and prize fighting had been popular in America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nothing contributed to the rise of

²⁰ Robert E. Weir and James P. Hanlan, *Historical Encyclopedia of American Labor*, Vol. I. (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 153. According to Schor in *The Overworked American*, work had been done to provide reasonable work hours for the American Working Class, *The Fair Labor Standards Act* solidified the 8-hour workday as the standard for the rest of the twentieth century. Many historians argue that this "leisure time" was overcome by the average working person's desire for money rather than free time. However before this desire for consumerism, the working class general had shorter days and more free time.

organized sports in America like the popularity of baseball.²¹ Emerging in the 1830s, baseball, with its straightforward rules along with its flexibility to be played anywhere with a reasonable amount of space, made the game accessible to most people. The game began to gain natural organization as its popularity increased after the Civil War. Stadiums built at the beginning of the twentieth century confirmed the importance of the game to communities, as Davis described:

The New York Giants replaced their burned-out Polo Grounds in 1911 with a new horseshoe-shaped double-deck stadium that seated 35,000, the largest seating capacity of the new stadiums. In 1923, however, the Yankees opened the most famous ballpark in America, which eclipsed that capacity. Located in the lower Bronx, Yankee Stadium had a capacity of 70,000, a monument to the game's increased popularity and management's vision of a prosperous future.²²

The large new stadiums and arenas built across the country included sectioned off areas specifically for sports journalists reporting the game. The press box existed as a place for “journalists only,” and often described as a secluded quiet workplace for serious and well-rounded reporting. The establishment of large capacity stadiums brought also the establishment of the press box. The rapidly developing field of sports journalism needed reporters, including women. But though organized sports grew, and opportunities for sports journalism grew, the field grew no more welcoming for the female sports reporter.

The struggles that early female sports journalists faced paralleled with the struggles of female athletes during this time. In the early twentieth century, questions of a woman's role in society began to shift the expectations of female influence in public and private realms, including athletics. Though men posed repressing arguments against women's participation in athletics, often women wanted to maintain a refined womanhood in a world dominated by masculine influence by keeping themselves for the home. This ideology influenced lack of female participation in not only athletics, but also other masculine reserved influences such as politics

²¹ Richard O. Davies, *Sports in American Life: A History* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 20-23.

²² Ibid, 79-80.

and education. The idea that sports, and even education endangered young women permeated American society. Pamela Dean explains:

Behind these concerns was the fear that the brightest daughters of the middle and upper classes were sacrificing their health and endangering their reproductive capacities in the pursuit of higher education. These apprehensions were based on the assumption that the body contained a finite store of energy. Energy drawn to the brain for intellectual activity was energy denied to the reproductive organs—a dangerous proposition, especially during the delicate and formative years of puberty.²³

The myth that women seemed too weak to participate in athletics was an argument used to exclude women from competitive sports in the early twentieth century. If women did participate in athletics, they were often seen as masculine as sports had been reserved for men, and that by playing sports women would be, as Dr. Dudley Sargent put it in 1912, “destroying the beautiful lines and curves of her figure, and are robbing her of that charm and elusiveness that has so long characterized the female sex.”²⁴ Women had been expected to maintain the look of thin or delicate while maintaining their cultural task as a woman, and playing sports did not always achieve these goals. Sports were often regarded as inappropriate for women because of the violent nature of competitive athletics that began to gain popularity without any sort of safety guidelines. Some women remained just as hesitant to participate in sports as men were to let them. As Harper relates, “by the 1920s the women educational leaders had effectively discouraged women’s varsity competition in part because of the growing evils in the men’s ‘win at all cost version’: exploitation, cheating, commercialism, specialization, and injuries.”²⁵ The

²³ Pamela Dean, *‘Dear Sisters’ and ‘Hated Rivals’: Athletics and Gender at Two New South Women’s Colleges, 1893-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1997), 340-345.

²⁴ Stephanie Twin, *Out of the Bleachers: Writings on Women and Sport* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 53. A quote from Dr. Dudley Sargent in 1912 observing how many were thinking during about women and athletics. He believed women and men to have the same “athletic potential,” and was controversial.

²⁵ William Arthur Harper, *How You Played the Game: The Life of Grantland Rice* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 460.

Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 194.

lack of encouragement for women in sports affected the participation of women in sports journalism.

The social restrictions that kept women off the playing field and out of the newsroom pointed to greater social restrictions during this time in history. In *Women, Media, and Sport*, Creedon explains, “Sport is an expression of the sociocultural system in which it occurs; and sports mirror the rituals and values of the societies in which they are developed.”²⁶ By giving a function of sport in society, historians are able to see how stories like Jill Jackson’s contribute to the bigger picture of her time period. Creedon notes, “At the most fundamental level, gender even influences which games or activities are defined as ‘real’ (‘macho’) sports. Synchronized swimming and fishing, for example, have peripheral status in the U.S. sports world because they involve values such as grace and patience, not often associated ‘real,’ that is with male professional, sports.”²⁷ Women did participate in some traditional male sports, but with modifications and feminine standards. The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, established in 1943, had regulations including, “Boyish bobs are not permissible and in general your hair should be well groomed at all times with longer hair preferable to short haircuts. Lipstick should always be on.”²⁸ Creedon explains the intimate relationship between gender values and sports, with a look at this effect on both the involvement of female athletes and sports journalists.

Historians have enumerated the many ideological arguments against women participating in sports journalism—the idea that women would not be suitable for sports reporting, and particularly not suitable for radio. By the early 1930s, radios could be found in most American

²⁶ Pamela J. Creedon, *Women, Media, and Sport: Challenging Gender Values* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 4.

²⁷ Ibid, 5.

²⁸ All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Players Association, League Rules of Conduct, www.aagpbl.org/index.cfm/pages/league/18/league-rules-of-conduct (accessed September 14, 2016).

homes and large companies were paying to broadcast sporting events for advertising opportunities. The atmosphere for sports journalism continued to change, and early female sports journalists became willing to adapt and dedicate themselves to being successful in the new technology. However, again barriers set up against female participation noted that, as Chambers, Steiner, and Fleming note, “the voice of a women ‘is very undesirable and to many, both men and women, displeasing’ ... a survey of 5,000 listeners apparently found that men’s voices were preferred to women’s by 100 to 1.”²⁹ Also explanations circulated that ‘men are the consumers of sports news and men are not interested in women’s sports. Nor are they interested in serious sports news produced by women.’³⁰

The reality of women not taken seriously tied to the ideology that women journalists simply did not have the knowledge to cover sports, particularly the immediate, play-by-play demands of radio, followed by the claim that men wanted to listen to accurate, play-by-play style radio, and women, with inferior knowledge, would be incapable of that kind of work. As Bradley reports, some claimed that women did not have the same vocal resonance as men, therefore they did not seem as pleasant to listen to, therefore their place would not ever be in broadcasting. If allowed on the radio at all, they might find their place in the inexpensive day programming for women, but not in prime time sports coverage as it was claimed that “women’s voices were generally considered ‘shrill and ill-mannered’ and lacking the ‘conviction’ of the male voice.”³¹ Radio executives steered away from anything that did not bring the listeners, and the perception that women’s voices would offend audiences became a barrier for women’s success in the growing opportunities in sports radio broadcasting. The overwhelming attitude of

²⁹ Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner, and Carole Fleming eds. *Women and Journalism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 31.

³⁰ Ibid, 112.

³¹ Bradley, *Women and the Press*, 199.

the period that women had no place in sports, whether playing them or covering them as journalists, resulted in female sports reporters of the period seldom being respected by their peers, and the physical representation of this lack of respect exhibited itself in the segregation of the press box. It remained a workplace for serious and well-rounded reporting, and this designation did not include women journalists. Female sports journalists were often forced to sit in the boxes reserved for players' wives to do their reporting. Women would rarely, if ever, be seen in the press box of stadiums and venues as it was established as an assumed male space. Understanding both sports and the press box in the 1940s as a male space emphasizes the distinctions of status between men and women. Daphne Spain explains, "initial status differences between men and women create certain types of gendered spaces and that institutionalized spatial segregation then reinforces prevailing male advantages." The rejection of the female sports journalists in the press box points to the view of women and social construction of the 1940s.³²

Despite the struggle and dismissal of women in American sports journalism in the early twentieth century, women like Jill Jackson took the opportunities at hand to enter into the growing field. She existed as part of a generation of women who refused to be stopped by the barriers put in the way of their success, and as Boyle wrote, "there have been a range of role models for each subsequent generation of women wanting to become sports reporters and sportswriters."³³ Even before Jackson's era and before the establishment of the press box, female journalists had been working their way into the sports section:

On a September day in 1869, John Bigelow, the *Times* editor and chief, heard a galumphing noise and looked up from his desk to see a huge apparition bearing down on him. The apparition was six feet two inches tall, garbed in rough Irish

³² Collins, *She Was There*, 140; Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 6.

³³ Boyle, *Sports Journalism*, 147.

tweeds, and shod in thick-soled brogues. A whiff of the stables perfumed the air. A deep, melodious voice with an Irish lilt said, "I am Maria Morgan. I want a job."³⁴



In an article about overcoming her own obstacles, Jill Jackson explains that "after years of toil, sweat... and 'almost tears,' things are going my way." Folder I, Box II, "Jill Jackson Papers," Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

Historians have used Maria, or Middy Morgan, as a starting point for "Milestones for Women in American Newspaper Sports Journalism." She is often included as the first of a couple of dozen major figures working in the field of sports journalism from 1869 to 1988. Morgan was an Irish American woman who pioneered in reporting on horseracing. Renown for her athletic ability as well as her livestock handling, she was well suited for race reporting.³⁵ She continues as a woman accredited with being a role model for female sports journalists after her over the next consecutive decades and made way for the next generation of female sports journalists to follow, such as Ina Eloise Young who is accredited with being the first sports editor in America. Young continued to work with baseball into the 1900s and through her work in sports editing proved that women could succeed in a variety of areas of sports journalism. Margaret Goss made a name for women in sports journalism with her work on women's participation in sports for the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1924, only 10 years shy of the beginning of Jill Jackson's career.³⁶

Though historians agree that these women stand as pillars in the history of early females

³⁴ Nan C. Robertson. *The Girls in the Balcony: Women, Men, and the New York Times* (New York: Random House, 1992), 44.

³⁵ Creedon. *Women, Media, and Sport*, 73.

³⁶ Ibid, 73.

in sports journalism, rarely are any women mentioned to have led the fight for the press box as Mary Garber and Judith Cary Waller. Garber became a sportswriter in the early 1940's at *Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel* sports department who, like Jackson, covered a wide range of athletics. As Collins wrote, "She's written about almost every sport at some time: football, basketball, baseball, boxing, wrestling, swimming, auto racing, steeple chasing, skeet shooting, golf, tennis, horse shows, track, cross-country, tennis, and the Soap Box Derby."³⁷ Garber covered college sports, wearing her trademark sneakers and knit cap while being an avid tennis player herself.³⁸ She became known for her persistence, as it was a required trait during this time.

An obstacle and sacrifice mentioned by several of the pioneers of women in sports journalism was family. The demands of journalism often conflicted with the chance for family life. Mary Garber reflected, "This has been my whole life ever since I've been doing it. Now a lot of women sports writers are married, but I think being a wife and a sports writer would have been tough in my day."³⁹ Maintaining the status of single was one way that some female sports journalist fought for their success. Garber's story, engaging in many parallels with Jacksons, as Jackson seldom mentioned family. Judith Cary Waller, another female sports journalist that is often mentioned, was also an active sports journalist the same time as Jackson in the 1940s. Waller is known for her efforts in inaugurating live coverage of athletics, as she became the first to broadcast the Chicago Cubs.⁴⁰ As one of the most notable early female sports journalists, Waller's story also contributes many of the same realities as Jackson's story. Speaking of her fight for success, Waller mentioned:

³⁷ Collins, *She Was There*, 131.

³⁸ Ibid, 131-140.

³⁹ Ibid, 140.

⁴⁰ Chambers, *Women and Journalism*, 31.

I got into sports writing in 1944, during the Second World War. I was working on the news side of the *Winston-Salem Sentinel*. While the men were away fighting the war, a high school boy used to come by and put out the sports page before he went to school. Then he went into the navy, and there wasn't anybody to take his place. The staff was all women at that time. I'm not sure why, but I was picked to handle the sports page. I just got fascinated by it and loved it. During the war, women did everything. My college roommate joined the WASPs, the Women's Air Force Service Pilots, who flew planes during the war. She was the best brought up young lady in the world, but she wanted to do something.

Unlike other female journalists, Waller gained some support from her editors. In one instance she was forced to sit in the "wives box" to cover her story. After complaining about this to the higher up, she would never be forced to do this again. She covered major events with Team USA and continued in her profession for many years predicting the future for women in sports journalism: "I think the toughest thing for any woman sportswriter to handle is the dressing room. I think the new breed of women sportswriter is just going into the dressing room whether the guys are dressed or not."⁴¹ Today, women journalists move in and out of men's dressing rooms, unremarked. Working during the same decade as Jill Jackson, both Waller and Garber's stories are often mentioned in sports literature; however the story of Jill Jackson, a woman equally influential during the same period, is missing. This work will seek to fill that void.

Jill Jackson

Before graduating from Sophie B. Wright High School, in the late 1930's Alice Schwartz was a student athlete at Newcomb College in New Orleans. She was involved in theater on campus as she was also the president of the Newcomb Dramatic Club, the Debate Team, and a part of the "Yell Squad" that cheered on the Newcomb Basketball Team. However, her primary love was tennis. She received the Tennis Class Cup, the Individual Tennis Cup, and played

⁴¹ Collins, *She Was There*, 140.

varsity every season. The *Newcomb College Paper* wrote in the gossip column, “Virginia Rembert and Alice Swartz each have a black eye... current alibis have it that Virginia got hers playing baseball, and Alice, tennis.”⁴² She continued to play in tournaments after she left Newcomb, until a back injury permanently put her out of the game. Despite never again to play sports, Alice Swartz, under her pen name Jill Jackson, later became an important figure for athletic women in the American South—namely one of its first female sports journalists.

Alice Schwartz showed to be engaged in 1935 to Marks Isaacs II as newspaper announcements note, “Claiming wide interest here will be the wedding of Miss Alice Schwartz, daughter of Mrs. Albert F. Schwartz, and Mr. Marks Isaacs, II son of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard M. Isaacs, which will be celebrated on Thursday, March 28.”⁴³ Both Alice and Marks were from Jewish families, and are mentioned as participating in Jewish Youth events around the city. In July of 1936, the *Times-Picayune* recognized Alice S. Isaacs and Marks Isaacs II being casted in the show *June Moon*, as well as other theater productions at the Le Petite Theatre in the French Quarter.⁴⁴ Alice Isaacs is noted in the paper for theater productions and tennis tournaments in the late 1930s, with little mentioned of her last name as Isaacs in newspapers or personal accounts of Jill Jackson after this time. At the time of Jackson’s death, her obituary describes her as only being survived by nieces and nephews.

Marks Isaacs graduated from Tulane University and came from a prominent, well-known

⁴² Box 3, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁴³ *Times-Picayune*, March 7, 1935. This article mentions, “The wedding will be very quietly solemnized, with only members of the immediate family present, at 11 o’clock in the morning at the home of the bride-elect’s uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin H. Stern, on Newcomb Boulevard.” Though she kept quiet about her personal life, Alice Schwartz is also mentioned in several article cutouts of her scrapbook in addition to engagement announcements, and is publically thanked by a golf tournament, “Thanks to Jill Jackson (Mrs. Marks Isaacs) for the nice plug on our tournament.” *Times-Picayune*, September 28, 1941.

⁴⁴ *Times-Picayune*, July 23, 1936.

family.⁴⁵ Isaacs's grandfather and namesake, Marks Isaacs I, moved as a Jewish immigrant from Germany to New Orleans in 1870 to work with his uncle, Simon Kaufman, who then owned a small dry goods store. This store eventually became the well-known department store Kaufman and Isaacs. In 1901, Marks Isaacs decided to pursue business with S.J. Schwartz and left the department store and continued to grow into a property-owning businessman. Alice's father, Albert F. Schwartz, passed away by the 1940s as her mother is noted after this time often in the society pages.⁴⁶ In all, both families were dignified and well respected in the community, with the Isaacs family house still standing at 5120 St. Charles Avenue.

Alice was introduced to her first audience while on campus at Newcomb in the theater department. When she was not playing tennis, she was headlining in a number of school productions, and developed a stage presence that she carried with her to the radio business. She



Left, Henry Dupre' of *WWL Radio*, or as he is titled "Mr. Radio. Right, Jackson seen fourth from the right on one of her first assignments to the Grand Isle Tarpon Rodeo in August on 1941. Scrapbook I, Box I, "The Jill Jackson Papers"

and Marks joined Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carré and met a number of influential people including the Dupres of WWL Radio. After observing her for months, Henry and Peggy Dupre

⁴⁵ *Times-Picayune*, November 25, 1934.

⁴⁶ *Times-Picayune*, April 26, 1934.

Deborah Pollack, *Visual Art and the Urban Evolution of the New South*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press: 2015), note 182. It is not clear whether or not S.J. Shwartz is a relative of Alice Schwartz, but it seems to be so. Pollack explains that Schwartz is often misspelled as Shwartz.

asked if she would be interested in visiting a radio show. Knowing of her athletic background and continually impressed by her sense of timing, Henry Dupre asked if she would help him cover a women's golf tournament. While at the golf tournament, Richard Jones of Jax Brewery heard Alice Schwartz and he asked her to be a regular for a sponsored show on WSMB-AM. Without hesitation, she agreed. One of her first projects was covering a local favorite—Pirogue races in Barataria. Knowing the opportunity at hand, Alice Schwartz dropped her given name and adopted her new identity influenced by her Jax Brewery sponsorship, Jill Jackson.

Starting out, Jackson hosted a show with her male colleague Jack McCarthy delivering a sports beat at 4:30 in the afternoon. By July of 1943, the *Times-Picayune* was listing Jill Jackson on the radio programming without her male counterpart and moved up to the 5:30 spot. Jackson eventually was seen across the radio programming with a show on Saturday morning, Jill Jackson's sports show was prime time five days a week for five minutes, while she also reported "Jax and Jill in Hollywood on Tuesdays and Thursdays." She was a success right out of college, and built a fan-base of male listeners who stayed faithful to her sports program. Everyone in the city knew the name Jill Jackson as advertisements read, "Jill Jackson... Only Woman Sports Commentator in the U.S.!" and "Diminutive Jill Jackson, radio's tiny mite of dynamite, brings you a play-by-play commentary on the world of sports, local and national, as seen through a woman's eyes."⁴⁷

Jackson networked with businessmen across the city and in turn created a household name across New Orleans. She was invited to events, parties, and eventually given opportunities to host radio shows apart from her own 5-minute sports casting. She befriended Owen Brennan, who asked if she would be interested in hosting a once a week show at his upcoming posh

⁴⁷ "Whaaattt! And Leave Show Business!!!", Box I, *Jill Jackson Papers*, Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA. *Times-Picayune* August 20, 1941; *Times-Picayune* July 22, 1943.



Left, Noted "T.P." or *Times-Picayune* announces Jackson as "Only Woman Sports Commentator in the U.S." Right, Jill Jackson in Walt Disney's Office in Hollywood, California. She is pictured with some of Disney's Oscar trophies and a familiar mouse on her shirt. Folder II, Box I, *Jill Jackson Papers*, Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

restaurant Brennan's, which would eventually create a special "Jill Jackson Lunch Salad" on its menu. Jackson made certain to give back to the City of New Orleans by hosting benevolent shows such as "Know Your Red Cross," a program focusing on the importance of supporting local Arts and Skills Corps.⁴⁸ She made herself available for charity events for injured soldiers, by hosting comedy shows and auctions. She participated in holiday events and hospital visits, where people regarded her as "Sportscaster Jackson." Jackson took every opportunity that she could to make her career well rounded and reported on topics other than sports, though she became remembered as a sports authority.

As Jackson's radio career grew listeners, she continued to be a trusted source in athletics. An article in her scrapbook titled "Leading Ladies," mentions Jill Jackson as being "the only lady to ever have her name on the Esquire Sports Poll." This was not her only time to be a solitary female presence, as one of the only female members of the New Orleans Junior Sports Association, she along with the NOJSA, organized programming and clinics for the youth of all class in New Orleans. An article titled, "400 Men and a Girl..." noted Jackson as a speaker at an

⁴⁸ *Times-Picayune*, September 5, 1944.

event honoring the most popular sports writers in New Orleans, and she was the only female on the stage. Jackson contributed to clinics, especially those for tennis and golf, in hopes that more young girls would have the chance to be a part of the athletic community of New Orleans. Jackson also attended meetings held in the Roosevelt Hotel by the New Orleans Association of Commerce Sports Committee in order to organize yearly sporting events for the youth of the city—again being the only female in attendance. Jackson gained the respect of her listeners by her consistent commitment to the people of New Orleans, her efforts to network, and her abilities as a reporter.⁴⁹

Her seemingly smooth rise in popularity was not free of difficulty. Though gaining respect across the city, the 1940s continued to be an unfriendly time for females in sports journalism. Jackson recollected some of these early times in her own words, one of her first interviews as a “feminine sportscaster.” Assigned to interview a prizefighter and his manager, Jackson had trouble as the men initially refused to do an interview with a girl. In her unpublished autobiography *Whaaattt! And Leave Show Business?* Jackson explains:

When they saw me looking to them like some fugitive from a debutante tea, they started fast retreat saying they would ‘return at a later date.’ I followed them through the revolving door, pleading and beginning for their return with every revolution, ‘no interview, no show.’ Reluctantly, they relented. On air, I tossed them some pretty legitimate fight questions that were answered with muffled grunts. Utter disdain lurked in every crease in their faces. More questions. More grunts. Then a deep silence was broken by the prizefighter’s manager who said, ‘Ladees and gennemun, I been in da fight game for toity one years, and dis is da foist time I evah been intaviewed by a skoit! An ladees and gennemun...She ah beaut’ I breathed a silent ‘Thank you, Lord,’ and from that point on we had a fine interview.⁵⁰

Jackson had been listed in the newspapers radio column at 5:30 in the afternoon into

⁴⁹ Scrapbook II, Box I, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁰ *Whaaattt! And Leave Show Business!!!*, Box I, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

January of 1947, sandwiched between “News-Sports” and “For Men Only” at 5:45.⁵¹ As a woman, normally uninvited to participate in athletic discussion, Jackson found a way around the obstacles in her career. She often smoothed-talked her way into opportunities, and eventually brought herself to a successful place in the male-dominated field of sports journalism. However, regardless of her undeniable abilities and ideal personality for sports journalism, Jackson found herself continually challenged by the reality of the 1940s. Though she had been continuously polled as one of America’s favorite sportscasters for almost a decade, she was not allowed in press boxes and often went great lengths to do her reporting. Jackson writes of her struggles of often not being allowed to gather local sports news on account of Tulane’s “no women rule,” in the press box or at football practice which banned all females from the area. Still finding a way to do her work she accounts, “No problem there. The stadium was surrounded by tall oaks, veiled in Spanish moss. I was able to balance on a limb, unseen, but I could see everything I need and sometimes a little bit more.”⁵²

Though Jackson used her ingenuity to overcome obstacles, male-dominated tradition consistently challenged her progress, particularly with the press box. The segregation of women from the camaraderie, convenience, and prestige of the press box caused an assortment of problems and reinforced a perception that women could not be valid members of the profession.

I had to sit outside the press box, just below their hallowed confines, on an uncomfortable, back-less bench that was about a two-block walk to the ladies room. When it rained there I sat, cold and wet, with papers blowing about.⁵³

Restrictions on women in the press box did not just occur at Tulane University and not just for Tulane games. In 1947, The University of Texas and The University of Alabama played the

⁵¹ *Times-Picayune*, January 9, 1947.

⁵² Folder I, Box II, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁵³ Folder I, Box I, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

Sugar Bowl and WDSU-TV asked Jill Jackson to report the big game from the press box. The station wanted Jackson to comment on the game for a closed circuit telecast to the Monteleone Hotel for local soldiers being housed there. This telecast would be one of the first of its kind, and certainly a first for women in sports journalism. With special permission from Tulane University, officials of the university told her that she would finally be able to enter the press box, but on the stipulation that she arrive before any of the other members of the press and could not leave until the last reporter had filed his story and left the area. Upon arrival, she realized that her visit to the press box actually led her to a secluded section, one separated from the rest of the male reporters. Jackson recalled,

I showed up at 7 on a chilly New Year's morning. I was escorted to the press box by two males. I sat and had coffee and doughnuts. After I sat a while, I came to realize the press box booth I was in did not have all the comforts of home, at least not for a woman. To make a long story short, I gave my halftime commentary, but with a pained expression... To shorten this disaster story all went well. I did some color and some chatter pre-game. Told all about what was going on down on the field at half-time and then sat back satisfied with what I thought and was told was a job well done. It got colder and colder. My work was over so when I was offered a brandy I enjoyed its warming effects. Another helped considerably but you know what happens with a drink on a cold day. It was then and only then that I realized the ladies room was on the other side of the press box. You take from there I had to wait till the game was over and by the time I got there I didn't care if I ever called a sporting event again. And I never did.⁵⁴

Jackson recalls that she was not allowed to leave the press box that day until 9:00 p.m. It was after this that Jackson had decided to reconsider her desire for sports casting.

Regardless of being locked out of the press box, Jackson won the respect of her male listeners and colleagues. She overcame the impeding argument that females lacked the knowledge and athletic opinion to be a sportscaster. Though a female, Jackson created a predominately male following that overlooked her gender and respected her for quality sports

⁵⁴ Jill Jackson, "Who Was Really the First Woman Sportscaster in N.O.," *Times Picayune*, November 12, 1981

reporting. Her voice remembered not as shrill or ill mannered, instead Sportscaster Jackson is noted, “Jill’s voice is clear and mellow, is equally suited to the fast pace of play-by-play action or the slower, chatty tone of an interview. Even when describing men’s events she uses feminine appeal—and her 70% male audience seems to eat it up.”⁵⁵ This was shown to be true as she was scheduled in the middle of prime listening time.



Left, 1944 Jackson in back left with the original Three Stooges and her colleague John Kent. Right, Jackson sunbathing with Phil and Jo Regan, labeled, “HWOOD 46.” Scrapbook II, Box I, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

Despite her popularity, Jill Jackson ended her sports reporting career in 1947. By May of 1948, the newspaper reported Jackson’s show as “Jill’s Hollywood 10:45 A.M., Hear Jill Jackson, New Orleans’ own Hollywood reporter every Tuesday and Thursday with personal apperances of Hollywood star and stories about your favorite movie actors.”⁵⁶ Her audience clearly changed from the male listeners getting off of work to listen at primetime 5:30 sports news, to the female listeners catching up on the latest Hollywood gossip. She took the opportunity to transition her focus to Hollywood reporting in 1948, as she had already made connections in that field of journalism. Jackson used this moment in her career to move up as she was in journalism during the bridge from radio to televison and moved to WWL-TV and

⁵⁵ Scrapbook I, Box II, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁶ *Times-Picayune*, May 20, 1948.

switched to entertainment interviews and Hollywood interviews for television. Over the next years, she became more successful than ever in her career as a journalist and met with nearly every Hollywood personality who visited New Orleans. In the early 1950s, she made such an impression that she was often invited for California visits from her guests. Friends such as film producer Ross Hunter, Phil and Jo Regan, Michael Curtiz of *Casablanca*, and Oscar winning Frances Marion were among the Hollywood lights who she claimed as friends.

After much success in New Orleans as a Hollywood reporter, Jackson found that her work brought her West and she left New Orleans for Hollywood in the 1950s. Jackson continued She took this opportunity to revisit her acting background as she appeared in a few featured films including *Madame X* and *Airport*, and continued to run her Hollywood columns in newspapers across the country, including the *Times-Picayune*. In 1960, Jackson wrote an article especially for the *Times-Picayune* titled, “Many New Orleanians are Now in Los Angeles: Gumbo, Jambalaya are Often Served.” In this article she humorously speaks of her colleagues who have made the move in order to further their careers, “all send love. And all say ‘it’s not so far from L.A. to La.’”⁵⁷ Jill’s Hollywood was still running in the *Times-Picayune* into 1980, when in November of 1981 the *Times-Picayune* announced that Jackson’s Hollywood Column would be discontinued and replaced with Marlyn Beck’s “Show Biz” column.⁵⁸ At the height of her career appearing in 1,700 newspapers, she would eventually cut her journalism ties with New Orleans. Jackson never retired, and continued to type all of her columns on the same Olivetti Typewriter she began with. Jackson passed away at the age of 97 in September of 2010 in Hollywood, California, as her obituary notes that she was survived by cousins, nieces, and

⁵⁷ *Times-Picayune*, April 1, 1960.

⁵⁸ *Times-Picayune*, November 30, 1981.

nephews.⁵⁹



Left, Jill Jackson with Manager Joe McCarthy when he was with the New York Yankees between 1931-1946. Right, Jill Jackson seen with male colleagues dated 1947. Scrapbook II, Box II, “Jill Jackson Papers,” Newcomb Archives and Vorhoff Library Special Collections, Newcomb College Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.

Conclusion

By the mid 1950s, women were allowed in press boxes across the country. However, the fight for the press box was not the end of struggle for women in sports journalism. As doors began to open for women in athletics, opposing ideas claimed that these women sacrificed their feminine nature upon deciding to be athletic. Social restrictions allowed for women to get away with playing sports, but labeled them tomboys. Sports in the United States moved forward slowly, as the atmosphere for sports reporting continued to be challenged. Some had negative opinions over women’s participation in athletics well into the twentieth century:

I hear they’re [Oberlin College] even letting w-o-m-e-n in their sports program now. That’s your Women’s Liberation, boy—a bunch of goddamn lesbians... You can bet your ass that if you have women around—and I’ve talked to Psychiatrists about this—you aren’t going to be worth a damn. No Sir! Man has to dominate. There’s just no other way.⁶⁰

Coach Woody Hayes of Ohio State football made this statement in 1973, and reflected the reality of women involved in athletics into the late twentieth century.

⁵⁹ *Times-Picayune*, September 9, 2010.

⁶⁰ Robert Vare, *Buckeye: A Study of Coach Woody Hayes and the Ohio State Football Machine* (New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, 1974), 38.

As the press box solidified itself as the obstacle of Jill Jackson's sports journalism career, the locker room became the obstacle for the female sports journalist to come. In 1977, the New York Yankees won the World Series against the Dodgers in a game that was reported all over the country. A huge game no doubt, would need the highest level of reporting. The next year, *Sports Illustrated* sued the New York Yankees for not allowing female sports journalists to report from the locker rooms. Melissa Ludtke worked for the magazine when denied access to important interview time. The locker room became not only a place for the players to get dressed, but more so a relaxed and important space for interviewers to get the best face time with players. Rather than being allowed to conduct interviews at the most advantageous time, Ludtke had to wait outside of the locker room after male journalists had already conducted interviews with star athletes. After much debate, the case opened the locker room door to female reporters finally in 1985. Ludtke eventually gained access, however ostracized by her male colleagues.⁶¹

In her thesis *Women in Sports Journalism*, Swanson explains that if women reported in locker rooms before the 1960s, they reported primarily on women's sports teams. This occurred from an under hiring of women because of a "general sense that women did not belong in male dominated sports," an attitude that carried over to treatment of female sports journalists.⁶² Sexual harassment, unequal salary, and underrepresentation remained issues decades after the press box and the locker room opened to women. As late as 2013, the American Society of News Reporters released that 90% of sports journalism editors were male. One female *ESPN* writer, Kate Fagan, noted that she engaged as much as she could with the female voice in sports journalism in efforts to create a sense of community and encouragement, believing that "if

⁶¹ Sherry Ricchiardi, "Offensive Interface," in *Women and Sports in the United States*, ed. Jean O'Reilly and Susan K. Cahn (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2007), 309.

⁶² Sara Ellen Swanson, "Women in Sports Journalism" (Master's Thesis, San Jose State University, 2009), 1,9.

you're only employing one demographic, you're going to become one-note and a lot of stories you put out are going to feel the same and sound the same.”⁶³

An argument put against female sports journalists in the twentieth century perpetuated that they were not able to participate in sports journalism because they knew little about sports. This idea became difficult to counter, as women had not been invited to participate in athletics at the college or professional level. In the late twentieth century, underrepresentation of women in sports journalism did not reflect women's interest in sports, and the desire for female voice in athletics grew too large to be ignored. Dramatic increases in female participation in sports can be observed after the establishment of Title IX. Passed in 1972, Title IX resulted after a long anticipated effort to end discrimination of women in athletics, particularly college athletics. It increased women's athletic participation with a simultaneous increase in women in sports journalism. College athletic programs opposed to female participation believed initially that Title IX would either not apply to athletics, or would be easily overturned. This was not the case. Eventually, it was established explicitly that females could not be discriminated against or excluded from programs receiving federal funding.⁶⁴ Women had an opinion in athletics after Title IX because women finally had the opportunity to be more athletic.

Women in sports journalism knew that in order to move forward, they would have to create a networked community for the growth of their careers, rather than working for individual success. Women, like Christine Brennan, wanted female sports journalists to thrive in the sports section without being seen as a liability. In 1987, Brennan and 115 members formed the Association for Women in Sports Media (AWSM), with the intentions of serving “as a positive

⁶³ Kate Fagan, interview by Caroline Modarressy-Tehrani, “It’s Just Really Good Business to Include Women’s Voices,” Huffington Post Live, February 24, 2014.

⁶⁴ Sara Ellen Swanson, “Women in Sports Journalism” (Master’s Thesis, San Jose State University, 2009), 5; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688 (2013).

advocate for women in sports media, through networking and national visibility...” and “promoting fair portrayal of female professionals in sports media.”⁶⁵ After decades of solitary fighting, female sports journalists unified under the ASWM in such a way that allowed for success in sports reporting to be achievable. Since Title IX and the establishment of networking communities like ASWM, women after Jill Jackson have a present voice in athletics.

Jill Jackson’s story as a sports journalist can be used to measure the progress of women in sports journalism. Jackson left sports journalism in 1947, and then the city of New Orleans in the 1960s for a successful career in California as a television personality and a Hollywood journalist. While she came from a well-off family, naturally talented, and well-liked, social restrictions kept Jackson from the press box. Even as a competitive college athlete with a firm knowledge of sports, again, restrictions of custom and prejudice overruled her credentials. With everything in her favor, the rejection of Jill Jackson in the press box provides insight into the lives of American women in sports and journalism during the 1940s. Despite her inability to break through the physical barrier of the press box, Jackson did succeed in gaining the respect and loyalty of a majority male audience, a hurdle that still remains for many present-day female sports journalists. By her hard work, talent, and persistence despite barriers, her legacy endures as today women across the nation are not only able to report from the press box, but also from the locker rooms.

⁶⁵ Pamela Creedon and Roseanna Smith, “Women Journalists in Toyland and in the Locker Room: It’s All About the Money,” in *Women in Mass Communication*, ed. Pamela Creedon and Judith Cramer (Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, 2007), 155.

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